

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: October 12, 2017

Agenda Item: 2018 Fishing Regulations

Division: Fisheries **Action Needed:** Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 Min

Background

The fishing regulation process is based on a four-year cycle, where the first year of each cycle is dedicated to actively soliciting ideas for changes from the public. During the following three years of the cycle (“off-cycle” years), ideas are only solicited internally from FWP biologists, fish managers and enforcement personnel. Proposals developed during off-cycle years are proposed to the commission only if they meet certain criteria: achieve certain enforcement needs, provide clarification for regulations, are important for the conservation of a fish species, are making changes to regulations no longer relevant, or fulfill direction provided in management plans. The fishing regulation proposals for 2018 are an off-cycle year; the next year with full public involvement will be 2020.

Public Involvement Process & Results

Because the 2018 fishing season is an “off” year, changes are only solicited internally. The public was not solicited directly, although ideas received from the public were considered. Proposed regulation changes were presented to the Commission at the August 10, 2017 meeting, and were approved for a 30-day public comment period. A total of 10 comments were received during the comment period of August 21-September 20, 2017. Two of the commenters supported all the proposed changes as written. One commenter wrote in opposition to the proposed prohibition on the harvest or possession of mussels in the Western and Central Fishing Districts. One commenter was opposed to the bait seining changes in the Rock Creek drainage. One commenter supported the Bitterroot River recreation rule changes being proposed through another process. One commenter asked for restrictions on commercial outfitters on the Missouri River below Holter Dam. One commenter asked for changes to the catch-and-release angling guidelines (page 10 in current regulation booklet). The other three commenters asked for regulation changes that were not being proposed—changing the perch limit on Holter, spearfishing for pike on Canyon Ferry, and the desire to see seasonal restrictions on tributary fishing.

Alternatives and Analysis

The proposed regulation changes for 2018 list each proposal individually, and summarize the public comments (if any) that were received during the comment period. The FWP response and final recommendation from FWP is then provided for each proposed change.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends that all proposed regulations be adopted by the Commission for the 2018 fishing season, and feels that adequate clarification was provided for those two commenters who opposed the prohibition on the harvest and possession of mussels and the prohibition of live minnow collection and use in the Rock Creek drainage.

Proposed Motion

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt FWP’s proposed regulation changes for the 2018 fishing season.